

As Nunavut Celebrates its 10th Anniversary, A Survey Gauges Southern Canadians' Views on the North For the First Time

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As Nunavut Celebrates its 10th Anniversary, A Survey Gauges Southern Canadians' Views on the North For the First Time

Three Quarters of Canadians think that 'Canadian politicians should focus more attention on Canada's North and less on our Southern neighbour, the USA'.

Toronto, ON – A new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and the Dominion Institute has revealed that three quarters (74%) 'agree' (24% strongly/50% somewhat) that 'Canadian politicians should focus more attention on Canada's North and less on our Southern neighbour, the USA'.

The survey was released to mark the upcoming LaFontaine-Baldwin Lecture to be given by Siila Watt-Cloutier, Nobel Prize nominee and former President and International Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council on May 29 in Iqaluit, Nunavut. This marks the first time that one of Canada's most important national lectures will be held in the Northern regions of Canada. The Lecture, chaired by John Ralston Saul, is co-organized by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and the Dominion Institute.

The survey also found that nine in ten (88%) Canadians 'agree' (36% strongly/52% somewhat) that 'the most important guarantee of sovereignty in the Arctic is the presence of the people living there'. This is compared to 54% who 'agree' (15% strongly/38% somewhat) that the presence of military focus is the best guarantee of sovereignty in the north.

On a University in the Arctic...

A majority (59%) of Canadians realize that Canada is the only one of 8 circumpolar countries that does not have a university in the Arctic. In this regard, three quarters (74%) of Canadians 'agree' (26% strongly/48% somewhat) that Canada should have one located somewhere in the territories.

On Climate Change...

Eight in ten Canadians (77%) 'agree' (25% strongly/52% somewhat) that 'climate change will soon destroy the life and habitat of Canada's North'. In this regard, nine in ten (88%) Canadians 'agree' (43% strongly/45% somewhat) that 'we should look to the Arctic as an early warning signal for the effects of climate change in Canada'. Furthermore, most (84%) believe (36% strongly/48% somewhat) that Canada has an even greater responsibility to tackle climate change because so much of our landmass is in the Arctic.

Testing Canadians Knowledge about the North...

The survey also looked at Canadians' knowledge about the North. Nine in ten (92%) Canadians know that the Inuit are officially recognized as Aboriginal peoples in Canada. One half (51%) is aware that there are more Inuit living in Canada today than at any point in our history.

Six in ten (62%) know that the United States and other countries dispute Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage, but a sizeable number of Canadians thought that the dispute was over the Hudson Strait (19%), the Northeast Passage (13%) or even the Polar Bear Express (6%).

Eight in ten (83%) Canadians know that Canada is a circumpolar country. When thinking about Canada's north, most (57%) focus on its climate first and foremost, while others think about its geography (17%), its wildlife (14%), its people (10%) or its art (2%).

The survey found a majority (52%) of Canadians do not know that Canada has three territories. In fact, only 48% of Canadians knew that Canada has three territories in addition to its ten provinces, while others thought Canada has two (34%), one (12%), four (4%) or five territories (2%). Further, only one in three (33%) realized that citizens in Nunavut pay GST.

Visiting the North...

The survey found that one in ten (13%) Canadians has personally visited one of Canada's territories in the north, however, seven in ten (71%) 'agree' (20% strongly/51% somewhat) that 'Canada's north should be marketed as a major tourist attraction', while three in ten (29%) 'disagree' (4% strongly/25% somewhat).

Perhaps a result of relatively few Canadians having visited the north, two thirds (67%) 'agree' (19% strongly/47% somewhat) that they 'find it difficult to imagine what life is like for Canadians living in the North'.

These are the findings of a poll conducted on behalf of the Dominion Institute and the Institute for Canadian Citizenship from March 18 to 23, 2009. This online survey of 1,011 Canadian adults was conducted via the Ipsos I-Say Online Panel, Ipsos Reid's national online panel. The results of this poll are based on a sample where quota sampling and weighting are employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data. Quota samples with weighting from the Ipsos online panel provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls, however, an unweighted probability sample of this size, with a

100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had the entire adult population of Canada been polled.

Regional Splits...

Regarding a number of attitudes and areas of knowledge, Canadians were not on the same page when it comes to Canada's North:

- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (63%) are most likely to 'agree' that the most important guarantee of sovereignty in the North is the presence of military forces, while Atlantic Canadians (60%), Ontarians (58%), British Columbians (56%), and Albertans (55%) are all less likely. Only a minority (41%) of Quebecers feel the same way.
- Atlantic Canadians (85%) are most inclined to believe that climate change will soon destroy the life and habitat of Canada's North, while those in Quebec (82%), Ontario (78%), British Columbia (76%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (72%) and Alberta (65%) are less likely.
- Albertans (65%) were most likely to know that there are more Inuit living in Canada today than at any other point in our history, followed by those living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (59%), Ontario (50%), British Columbia (48%), Quebec (43%) and Atlantic Canada (42%).
- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (55%) were the most likely to know that citizens of Nunavut pay GST, while British Columbians (41%), Albertans (39%), Atlantic Canadians (33%), Ontarians (31%) and Quebecers (23%) were less likely to know this.

- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (74%) have the highest propensity to know that other countries dispute Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage, while British Columbians (69%), Ontarians (66%), Albertans (65%), Atlantic Canada (61%) and Quebecers (50%) were less likely to know this.
- When thinking about Canada's North, Quebecers are the most likely to think about its climate (66%), while British Columbians are more likely than those in other regions of Canada to think about its geography (26%) first and foremost, and Ontarians are most likely to think about its wildlife (17%). Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba have the highest propensity to think about the North's people (17%), while Albertans are most likely to recall its art (5%).
- British Columbians are most likely (28%) to have personally visited one of Canada's territories, followed by those living in Alberta (20%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (16%), Atlantic Canada (12%), Ontario (11%) and Quebec (5%).

Generational Divide...

There also appears to be a generational divide when it comes to knowledge and attitudes about Canada's North:

- Older Canadians (62%) are more likely than those under the age of 55 (50%) to agree that the most important guarantee of sovereignty in the North is the presence of military forces.
- More older (58%) than middle-aged (49%) or younger (40%) Canadians know that there are more Inuit living in Canada today than at any other point in our history.



- Older Canadians (78%) are significantly more likely than middle aged (60%) or younger Canadians (47%) to know that Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage is disputed by others.

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